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Deadlines Extended for Russian Chemical Demilitarization

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By Kerry Boyd

States-parties to the [Chemical Weapons Convention \(CWC\)](#) decided at an October 7-11 meeting to extend “in principle” two interim deadlines for Russia to destroy part of its chemical weapons stockpile, but they postponed a decision on Russia’s request to extend two other deadlines, including the deadline for destroying its entire stockpile.

The decision, made during the seventh session of the Conference of the States-Parties held in The Hague, affects the deadlines for Russia to destroy 1 percent and 20 percent of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile, which consists of agents with high potential for offensive use. The states-parties, however, did not establish new specific deadlines. The conference authorized the executive council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which oversees implementation of the CWC, to establish a specific date for the 1 percent deadline and to recommend a new deadline for the 20 percent mark, which will be considered when the conference reconvenes for its eighth session in October 2003.

Under the CWC’s original terms, Russia committed to destroy 1 percent of its stockpile by April 29, 2000, and 20 percent by April 29, 2002. The states-parties had already extended the 1 percent deadline for Russia from 2000 to 2002. ([See ACT, June 2000](#).) The convention also requires member states to destroy 45 percent of their Category 1 weapons by April 29, 2004, and the remainder of their stockpiles by April 29, 2007, but Russia has said it will miss those deadlines. It has asked the OPCW to extend the final deadline until 2012. The conference has not yet decided whether to grant Russia an extension for its 45 percent and 100 percent deadlines.

In opening remarks to the conference, OPCW Director-General Rogelio Pfirter noted that the executive council emphasized at its last meeting that Russia must do everything possible to meet its deadlines for destruction. The council had also called on states-parties that provide assistance to the Russian chemical demilitarization program to continue their support, he added. ([See ACT, October 2002](#).)

Meanwhile, the United States and India “have met their obligations to destroy 20 percent of their declared chemical weapons stockpiles within five years after the entry into force of the Convention,” Pfirter said, adding that all states-parties with declared Category 2 and Category 3 chemical weapons “have fulfilled their obligation [to complete destruction] within the five-year time frame established by the Convention.”

The conference, which was attended by representatives from 109 of the 146 CWC states-parties, approved a 2003 OPCW budget of more than \$67.9 million—about a 10 percent increase over the 2002 budget.

Despite some positive changes, the U.S. General Accounting Office issued a report October 25 that concluded the OPCW’s inaccurate budget projections have been principally responsible for its large deficits. “The organization has consistently overestimated its income and underestimated its expenses,” the report says. The budget deficits have hindered the organization’s ability to conduct inspections, as required by the CWC.

The organization has counted unpaid assessments owed by member states as income and “overestimated reimbursement payments for inspections conducted in member states with chemical weapons-related facilities,” according to the report. Such member states owed the organization more than \$2 million from inspections as of June 2002, including the United States, which owed more than \$1.4 million.

The report calls on the U.S. secretary of state to work with the OPCW to develop a “comprehensive” budget plan and to report annually to Congress on progress improving the OPCW’s budgeting system.

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